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Written statement* submitted by Alsalam Foundation, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[22 May 2014]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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The Need to Address the Human Rights Crisis in Bahrain

On the occasion of the 26th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC), Alsalam Foundation, on behalf of Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB), strongly condemns the inaction of the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain in addressing ongoing and systematic human rights abuses. Over the last three years, the Government of Bahrain has continued to repress the basic human rights of its citizens and residents while misleading the international community with empty promises of reform. As such, ADHRB calls on the Member States of the Human Rights Council to concretely demonstrate to the Government of Bahrain that the international community will no longer be misled, and pass a resolution under Agenda Item 2 condemning Bahrain for its human rights derogations.

The dire status of human rights in Bahrain was recently witnessed by Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) recent temporary mission to the country, where the implementation of legislative measures designed to curb dissent has resulted in the imprisonment of over 3,800 persons on political charges. Many of these prisoners have been systematically targeted for arbitrary arrest, ill-treatment, and torture, with children numbering among the most abused. These violations continue to be carried out in an environment of impunity, as courts refuse to convict torturers and other human rights offenders.

Abuses such as these stand in stark contrast to Bahrain's obligations under international law and to independent human rights institutions. Numerous independent reviews have found that Bahrain has failed to effectively implement the recommendations of both the government-commissioned Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry and the 158 wide ranging recommendations of the second cycle Universal Periodic Review (UPR). Additionally, the government has yet to implement the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights or the Convention against Torture.

As Bahrain approaches its mid-term report at the end of this year, now is the time for the international community to encourage Bahrain to recommit to implementing meaningful reforms in line with the recommendations it accepted from its 2012 Second Cycle UPR. The international community and the Human Rights Council in particular can take strong action to hold the Government of Bahrain accountable by issuing a resolution under Agenda Item 2. This resolution must condemn the government's inaction in addressing its human rights abuses and enumerate a list of concrete yet achievable benchmarks demonstrate the willingness of the Bahrain government to cooperate genuinely with the Human Rights Council and to seriously implement the reforms it accepted in the UPR.

An Item 2 Resolution on Bahrain should call for:

- The release of all political prisoners;
- Restoring citizenship to all of those whose citizenship was arbitrarily revoked for political purposes;
- Facilitating the establishment of a permanent OHCHR mission in Bahrain with full technical and reporting mandates;
- Granting unrestricted access to the country without delay for the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, in particular the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment;
- Reforming the National Institute for Human Rights to achieve independence under the Paris Principles in order to achieve OHCHR accreditation;
- Repealing repressive national legislation curtailing citizens' rights to free assembly, expression, and association;
- Passing pending national draft legislation on nationality; and
- Withdrawing all current reservations to the CEDAW.

The resolution should also call on the Bahraini government to engage more fully with the HRC and the OHCHR by choosing to make their mid-term report an interactive process, with input from non-governmental organizations, civil society and the international community. Achieving these concrete benchmarks will help reduce tensions in the country and create the space for the political reconciliation necessary to resolve the crisis in Bahrain.